DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 383 045 EA 026 584

AUTHOR Hanson, E. Mark
TITLE Educational Change under Autocratic Democratic Governments: The Case of Argentina.
PUB DATE [95]
NOTE 42p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Decision Making; Democracy; *Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Governance; Policy Formation; *Social Control
IDENTIFIERS *Argentina

ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a study that: (1) contrasts the educational change strategies of a military/autocratic government (1976-83) and a civilian/democratic government (1983-93) in Argentina; and (2) identifies the major consequences of these strategies. The military regime attempted to produce its version of effectiveness and efficiency by managing through a command-and-control system; shaping values of discipline, order, and obedience; controlling through a tight body of regulations; purging all opposition; and establishing policy through officers of the armed forces. The civilian/democratic government attempted to produce change by managing through an educational leadership structure appointed by popularly elected officials, employing dedicated and trained educators regardless of political views, shaping values of democracy, providing for parent and student participation, controlling through norms of good judgment and flexible rules, and setting directions by societal consensus of the national interest. Although both strategies proved to be ineffective, the military strategy was also disastrous. The results illustrate the difficulty of changing an educational system despite the type of government in power. Data were gathered in Argentina through interviews and document analysis over a 5-month period. Lessons for educational change include: (1) pursue a generally accepted societal vision about the direction of education; (2) provide for wide participation in the decision-making process; (3) create stability in the Ministry of Education; (4) strengthen the planning capacity of the educational institution; (5) provide financial support to education; and (6) separate educational law from special interests. (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 383 045

EDUCATIONAL CHANGE UNDER AUTOCRATIC AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS: THE CASE OF ARGENTINA

E. Mark Hanson

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

E. M. Hanson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 026 584

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EDUCATIONAL CHANGE UNDER AUTOCRATIC AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS: THE CASE OF ARGENTINA

This study (1) contrasts how a military\autocratic government (1976-1983) and a civilian\democratic government (1983-1993) in Argentina differed in their strategies of educational change, and (2) identifies the major consequences of these strategies. The military regime attempted to produce its version of effectiveness and efficiency by managing through a command-and-control system, shaping values of discipline, order and obedience, controlling through a tight body of regulations, purging all opposition (real or imagined), and setting policy by officers of the armed forces who supposedly have a superior knowledge of the national interest. In contrast, the civilian\democratic government attempted to produce change by managing through an educational leadership structure appointed by popularly elected officials, employing dedicated and trained educators regardless of political views, shaping values of democracy, parent and student participation, controlling through norms of good judgment and flexible rules, and setting directions by societal consensus of the national interest. As the study points out, the strategy of change employed by the military regime proved to be ineffective, even disastrous. During the democratic period that followed (at least until mid-1993 when the study ended) the strategy of change had not been disastrous, but it had been ineffective. In both cases, and in a comparative context, the study attempts to explain why. With the support of a Fulbright Research Award, the data for the study were gathered in Argentina through extensive interviews and document analysis over a five-month period in 1993.

E. Mark Hanson
School of Education and
Graduate School of Management
University of California, Riverside
Riverside, California 92521

phone: (909) 787-4300
FAX: (909) 787-3942
Internet: HANSON@UCRAC1.UCR.EDU

EA 026 594

EDUCATIONAL CHANGE UNDER AUTOCRATIC AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS: THE CASE OF ARGENTINA

Around the world there are many examples of countries that have made transitions, oftentimes numerous transitions, between military\autocratic and civilian\democratic governments. Under both forms, a high priority is typically attached to changing their educational systems so that they more effectively support that government's socio-economic and political goals.[1]

This study (1) contrasts how a military\autocratic government (1976 to 1983) and a civilian\democratic government (1983 to 1993) in Argentina differed in their strategies of educational change, and (2) identifies the prominent consequences of these strategies. In most cases, educational change involves at least three things: creating an organization and management infrastructure that redirects the course and content of the educational system, which in turn more effectively supports the development goals of the nation. A recent World Bank report points out that "infrastructure represents, if not the engine, then the 'wheels' of economic activity."[2] Particular emphasis in this paper will given to the organization and management infrastructure associated with the public primary and secondary school system.

The Argentine case is particularly interesting because it demonstrates the use of an extreme range of tools and tactics to bring about the desired changes in the organization and management as well as content and direction of the educational system. The military regime, for example, attempted to produce

change through employing a command-and-control system, shaping values of discipline, order and obedience, controlling through a tight body of regulations, purging all opposition (real or imagined), and setting policy by officers of the armed forces who supposedly have a superior knowledge of the national interest.

In contrast, the civilian\democratic government attempted to produce change by employing dedicated and trained educators regardless of political views, shaping values of democracy, parent and student participation, controlling through norms of good judgment and flexible rules, and setting directions by societal consensus of the national interest. As the study points out, the military regime's strategy proved to be socially, politically and educationally disastrous. The strategy during the democratic period that followed (at least until mid-1993 when the study ended) healed many wounds but produced little significant educational change. In both cases, and in a comparative context, the study attempts to explain why.

In contrasting the approaches taken by the autocratic and democratic governments, the data analysis will be organized around specific organization and management forces which are keys to bringing about change successfully in any educational system. These forces are:

1. the vision held regarding the desired direction of change.
2. the degree of participation in the decision making process.
3 personnel stability in the educational system.
4. the role of educational planning in the change process.

5. the amount of public funding supporting the system.

6. the guiding role of educational law.

With the support of a Fulbright research award, data were gathered in Argentina during a five-month period ending in July 1993.[3]

Argentina: The Setting

Argentina throughout its history has been a nation of immense potential and promise; a nation blessed with expansive fertile lands, rich natural resources, and highly skilled workers. Prior to World War II, Snow and Manzetti write, "Argentina enjoyed one of the world's highest standards of living and was reputed to have become a major economic power. However, the worsening of political and economic instability after World War II turned a promised land into a country of lost promises."[4]

In 1991 the Ministry of Culture and Education (Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, MCE) conducted a self study and concluded that beginning with the 1960s, the educational system had become progressively "immersed in a deep crisis of both quality, quantity and results."[5] Specific problems identified are, "an inefficient, disarticulated, bureaucratic and overly regulated organizational structure," a lack of integrated and coherent objectives, a high rate of student drop out, a fragmented, anachronistic, and contradictory curriculum that lacks conceptual continuity. "The existing curriculum does not satisfy the expectations of the community with respect to the needs of today or the future." In addition, neither the nation's resources nor

access to educational opportunities are distributed equitably between the provinces and their socio-economic populations.[6]

The problems leading to this assessment have roots emersed deeply in the historic political instability of the nation. The military forces have not been contented to remain in their barracks and have taken control over the government on numerous occasions: 1930-32, 1943-46, 1955-58, 1962-63, 1970-73, 1976-83. However, even with these lapses into authoritarianism, Argentina's underlying political culture of democracy remained alive and served as the basis for a return to civilian governance. These frequent alternating forms of government have burdened significantly the development potential of the nation.[7] The next sections will illustrate how the last of this long line of dictatorships has retarded the development potential of Argentina.

The Military Regime: 1976-1983

On July 1, 1974 the Constitutionally elected President of Argentina, Juan Domingo Perón died, thus leaving the office to his vice president and widow, Isabel de Perón. As her government struggled with the problems of a declining agricultural production, a ballooning budget deficit, the beginning of hyper inflation, and two active guerrilla movements (The Peoples' Revolutionary Army, and the Montoneros), the military overthrew her government on March 23rd, 1976.

In a message to the nation, the military junta leader, General Jorge Videla, attempted to justify the coup d'etat

stating that the armed forces ended "the gravest crisis in our nation's contemporary history.... National authority had reached a phase of disintegration leading to a feudalist Argentina on the way to extinction."[8] Unlike previous military governments which were generally satisfied to manipulate or disrupt economic or social programs it did not approve of, or end the term of a government with a political ideology counter it its own, these military leaders set out to reform society through its proclaimed Process of National Reorganization (or El Proceso).

El Proceso focused on three basic objectives: the elimination of subversion, improvement in the economy, and the creation of a new national framework. Marcelo Cavarozzi explains that in the twisted view of the new regime, the eradication of subversion meant not only the guerrillas' activities, but also any form of dissenting behavior "whether found in the school, the family, the factory, or even the arts or culture."[9] Building a new national framework required eradicating the Peronists, the unions, parliamentary radicals and leftists. To build the economy required eliminating an industrial sector populated by an undisciplined worker class and inefficient managers.

Organization of an Authoritarian System of Government

Eric Nordlinger states that military governments usually assume one of three different forms: guardians, moderators or rulers.[10] As "rulers," when the generals leave the barracks,

> they imbue the regime with their own alleged virtues: organization, hierarchy, obedience, discipline, punctuality,

and efficiency. They eliminate participatory mechanisms such as legislatures, parties, and political associations, because they see little need to organize consent. They do away with competitive politics and all instrumentalities of representation in order to reduce complex issues to simple, clear-cut issues.

In Argentina, the military definitely assumed the role of hard-line rulers. The national and provincial constitutions and laws were put aside whenever it proved convenient. A hierarchical, command-and-control structure of governance was put in place with the army, navy and air force assuming jurisdiction over designated geographical areas of the country. Decision-making power was concentrated at the top with the military regime appointing all national government leaders, as well as the provincial governors who in turn appointed municipal mayors.

Even though Argentina is constitutionally designated as a federal system with a legitimate degree of regional autonomy, "the provincial ministers of education were territorial delegates of the National Ministry of Education, without any possibility of autonomous decision making regarding relevant aspects of education, and no objective possibility of questioning directives that came from the center."[11] With the regimentation of society as a means to an end, citizen participation became irrelevant if not counter productive.

The intensity of repression carried out in Argentina has no equal in contemporary Latin American history. In the name of

national security almost any individual or group could become the target of systematized, rationally planned, government sponsored terrorism.

> Everyone fell into the net: union leaders who struggled for a simple increase in wages, adolescents who were members of a student association, newspaper reporters that were not addicted to the dictatorship, psychologists and sociologists who were part of suspect professions, young pacifists, nuns and priests that had carried the teachings of Christ to the miserably poor. And friends of any of them, and friends of those friends; people that had been denounced for reasons of personal vengeance or by kidnap victims under torture.[12]

In 1984, under the democratically elected government of Raúl Alfonsín, the National Commission on the Disappeared (CONADEP) reported that 8,060 people were missing and presumably dead. By their own admission, a conservative estimate. Other estimates place this figure between 15,000 and 30,000.[13]

Education Under the Military Dictatorship

During the period of military rule, a principal role of the educational system, at all levels, became the "resocialization" of Argentine society.[14] As a point of departure, subversives had to be purged from academia. Some 3,000 professors, researchers and staff members were fired by the new minister of education. Beyond the outright firings, large numbers of university professors, secondary and elementary school teachers felt compelled to leave the country fearing for their safety as they

saw friends and colleagues mysteriously disappear from their classrooms. The massive brain-drain was of no apparent concern to the military regime.

In addition, ninety-five academic fields were eliminated from the universities, mostly from the social sciences.[15] The mechanisms of social participation in policy formation or even minor decisions in schools became closed. Parent participation became highly formalized and fundamentally limited to donating funds and attending ritualized student ceremonies.[16] Military delegates were commonly assigned to attend such meetings in order to protect against the emergence of "subversive activities." School authorities were even subjected to rules forbidding them to receive delegations of students or parents wanting to express their opinion about something.

The educational system, along with the rest of the nation, was subjected to a normative philosophy stressing moral conduct and authoritative discipline. The moral conduct emphasized the cultivation of virtues that integrate Christianity, national tradition, and the dignity of being an Argentine.[17] The emphasis on disciplined conduct could be seen in the vast body of rules that covered even the most minor details, such as, modes of appropriate dress, how books should be carried to the classroom, the language to be used in addressing others, and the prohibition of wearing student insignias. Each new rule carried an ominous threat at the end. "The lack of compliance to this directive will initiate corrective measures."[18] At this particular time in

Argentine history, the threat was not to be taken lightly. In sum, as Juan Tedesco points out, "the best educational climate was defined as a climate of respect, order and silence."[19]

With the dictatorship came the massive concentration of centralized power, and the constitutionally established federalist structure of government became a dead letter. As Braslavsky and Tiramonti point out, this Ministry bureaucracy was additionally fortified in its rigid respect of: the correct over the substantive, a closed and secret decision-making process, a steadfast ignorance of citizen demands, and a policy legitimization based on technical efficiency rather than social significance.[20]

The centralization was reinforced by a rigid chain-of-command that reached layer by layer down into the schools as the command and control system had superiors direct and inspect subordinates who in turn directed and inspected their subordinates.[21] In other words, a military model of management was superimposed over the educational institution.

The Federal Education Council

At the request of the provincial educational ministers, the Federal Educational Council (Consejo Federal de Educación) was created in 1972 to "plan, coordinate, advise and bring about agreements in adjustments to the educational and cultural policy that the nation requires...."[22] The provincial educational ministers and the National Minister of Education were members with the National Minister acting as chair. As a consulting

policy body with no executive powers, the decisions of the Federal Council were never intended to be binding on any participating jurisdiction.

During the 1973-76 period of constitutional democratic government, the Council met only three times and went almost unnoticed. However, shortly after the 1976 military golpe, the new Minister announced that the Federal Council would become the axis of transforming the educational policy and action of the country. All provincial educational ministers were to meet with the military leaders in their regions to establish priority themes that would ultimately shape the nation's educational framework.[23]

The Council's primary function moved from consultation to control as a consensus was imposed by the central power on the provinces. A stream of resolutions were produced to fulfill the established priorities of the military government as the transition was made from democratic federalism to autocratic federalism.[24]

Educational Planning

The golden age of educational planning in Argentina, as well as the rest of Latin America, began in the 1960s with the emergence of international development agencies (e.g., Alliance for Progress, UNESCO, OAS) stressing the theory of economic modernization through human capital development. The complex skills of educational planning were still being advanced when the 1976 coup took place in Argentina.

Inés Aguerrondo writes that the military government "carried out a policy of dismantling the country's technical offices, particularly in planning, perhaps because these units employed so many professionals trained in the social sciences."[25] In addition to purging the Ministry of Culture and Education (MCE) of its planning capability, provincial offices were either eliminated or cut significantly in resources and tasks. Even the school mapping process then underway intending to geographically locate and plot schools, roads and educational resources was canceled because the military regime thought such information might be of strategic value to a potential enemy.

Attempts at educational reform did take place during the dictatorship, but the planning conducted was anything but systematic. Fernández Lamarra, et al. write that the reform plans were (1) based on little or no internal or external consultation, (2) focused almost exclusively on the reform design, and (3) basically ignored the tasks of implementation and evaluation. The entire process was complicated by the fact that the process of gathering educational statistics virtually collapsed in 1978. The outcome of an educational change process attempting to supersede such handicaps is predictable.

> The scant reform execution, even beyond the political factors, is due to the limitations of the proposals themselves: they attempt to do many things simultaneously; priorities are not established; the activities proposed are neither linked nor initiated in a gradual fashion; the

proposed goals are virtually unreachable as they are not based on feasibility studies involving the availability of resources; they are not very innovative and creative, and in many cases reflect the same assumptions and criteria as the traditional system.[26]

Reform efforts frequently brought about considerable resistance on the part of teachers, educational administrators and interested sectors outside the schools. Much of this resistance came from their inability to participate in decisions that affected their working conditions, educational roles and mission.

The Teaching-Learning Process

A 1980 decree states that the educational policy objective of the Armed Forces under the National Reorganization Process is the formation of the human being that will ensure the historical continuity of Argentine society and keep vigil over the nation's system of values.[27] In practice, these goals meant the devaluation of intellectual inquiry and scientific knowledge to be replaced by disciplined socialization and officially approved knowledge.[28] What the military regime was looking for was "the reproduction of authoritarian order in the classrooms."[29]

In an analysis of selected textbook content over a period of years, Juan Tedesco found the term "the family" missing in earlier periods of democratic government but a central theme in 1977 texts stressing the role of hierarchy and authority figures. Not surprisingly, the term "democracy" disappeared from the texts to be replaced by notions as the compliance with duties, the

preservation of order and the security of national institutions.[30]

Just as the case with people, knowledge was subject to being classified as good or bad. Backed up by a body of national decrees and ministry circulares, senior national or provincial officials could declare specific teachers or instructional material as unacceptable for reasons alleged to be associated with dangerous ideological content, suspicious underlying values or even a threat to national security. Teaching methods were also suspect. For example, the teaching of modern math was challenged because the process "would serve as a bridge to subversive ideas."[31]

The role of the teacher was to be an obedient transmitter of officially approved knowledge. What teachers were not permitted to do, as emphasized in a MCE directive, was "to intervene in the formation of the objectives, characterization or selection of content."[32]

The extensive bodies of rules governing the schools served as effective tools of coercion directed at the teachers. Without the benefit of a trial or even the presentation of evidence, a teacher could be sanctioned for fomenting subversive behavior. The constant threat of being accused of subversive activity resulted as one of the most efficient of all mechanisms of control: self censorship.

Educational Finance Under the Military

To fund public expenditures, including education, in 1934

Argentina adopted a system called "coparticipation" (sometimes referred to as "revenue sharing" in other countries). That is, the central government collects taxes and through the use of a formula, distributes the income between the nation and the provinces. The distribution formula, and the policy-driven modifications that have modified it over the years, have always been extremely controversial.

In an analysis of the modifications to the distribution formula that have taken place since 1935 covering various military and civilian governments, an interesting conclusion can be drawn. During the constitutional regimes, more resources went to the provinces. "Under military regimes more resources went to the central government."[33]

In 1975, just prior to the coup, Argentina was spending 3.87 percent of its GNP and 16.8 percent of total public expenditures on education. However, by 1980 under the military those figures had dropped to 3.22 percent and 13 percent respectively.[34] Perhaps even more notable, the consolidated national and provincial per inhabitant expenditures dropped 24.1 percent during the years of the military regime (1976-1983).[35]

The military government pursued a strategy of budget reduction at the national level by transferring to the provinces responsibility for the primary schools that had historically been the responsibility of the central government's Ministry of Education. This decentralization program, as it was called, represented approximately 32 percent of the primary schools in

the country.[36] Without accepting any counter proposals, all the provinces were forced to sign agreements which "obligated the provinces to take exclusive charge of the financing of the 6,000 national schools."[37] The request by the provinces for a gradual transfer was rejected.

Fernández Lamarra writes that in many cases what was transferred "were grave problems (schools in awful condition, poorly paid teachers, limitations beyond available help, etc.) without the minimum finances available."[38] The real motivation behind the decentralization policy was "simply the transfer of a series of responsibilities without providing the provinces with the finances and technical capacity to carry them out."[39]

In short, during previous government administrations education had been frequently treated as an economic investment or even a community service, but under this dictatorship education was treated as an expense.[40]

The Fall of the Military Regime

Marcelo Cavarozzi writes that by the second half of 1982 the political condition of the country had reached a pathetic state of decomposition. A confluence of crises led to the evaporation of the military's power to govern, "but this does not imply a similar deterioration in its capacity to shoot...."[41]

Dividing the country geographically between the army, navy and air force for purposes of decentralized regional governance proved to be unworkable. Interservice rivalries broke out as they each fought for more power and resources. "The same

decentralization," Snow and Manzetti write, "was also responsible for the deterioration of the internal discipline within the armed forces and staggering corruption that involved many officers."[42] In short, the discipline the military leaders demanded of the Argentine people, they did not demand of their own kind.

The ill-defined, economic policies of the Proceso led the nation into a financial abyss. By the early 1980s, hyperinflation had arrived exceeding 300 percent per year, the foreign debt had tripled with the once healthy foreign reserves virtually vanishing. The economic devastation resulted in a crippled banking system, real wages and salaries dropping a third of their 1975 purchasing power, and the bankruptcy of large numbers of small and medium-sized businesses.[43]

The collapse of the military's capacity to manage the country did not result in the simultaneous emergence of a civilian dominated, democratic alternative. The opposition was too fragmented and beaten down under the heavy years of dictatorship. What ultimately brought the military regime down was the crushing defeat by the British during the Malvinas/Falklands War.

Democracy and Education: 1983-1993

On October 30, 1983 Argentines went to the polls and, with 52% of the popular vote, elected Raúl Alfonsín, candidate of the Radical Civic Union party, president for a six-year term. His Peronist opponent lost decisively with only 40 percent of the vote. Alfonsín's popularity remained relatively firm until 1988

when runaway inflation, a staggering economy, a series of pocket military rebellions, and social turmoil submerged his government and the country in chaos and turbulence.

On July 8, 1989, Carlos Menem, candidate of the Justicialista party, who had campaigned by promising a return to the glory days of Peronism, took office as the new President of Argentina. Although after the election he quickly moved to the political right, in the context of national democracy, the important point is that for the first time in more than half a century one civilian was able to pass the presidential sash to another civilian.

The Democratization of Education

Just as the military regime had set out to use the schools to teach the new order of values and political-ideology, so did the newly established democratic government. However, in contrast to the dictatorship's focus on order, discipline and silence, the newly elected democratic government, in the words of President Alfonsín, emphasized "liberty, tolerance, pluralism, knowledge and mutual respect..."[44]

Cecilia Braslavsky makes the point that democracy cannot simply be declared, it must be constructed, and that is what the new democratic government set out to do.[45] Several goals were established to reverse the policies of the dictatorship and facilitate the transition. (1) Teachers who lost their positions under the military regime were reinstated. (2) New programs in civic education were approved that stressed the transmission of

democratic values. Also, the encyclopedic emphasis on memorization was deemphasized in favor of thought processes that emphasized critical thinking. (3) Programs were adopted to expand enrollment from all socio-economic levels and reduce dropout. (4) Formal communication channels and opportunities were opened between teachers, school leaders, student and parent groups, and high level policy-making bodies. (5) Educational governance as a federal rather than a national entity was again reemphasized.[46]

With the return of democracy, the newly elected government placed in motion a strategy of change that held the promise of an educational system that all Argentines could unite behind.

The Pedagogical Congress

The chosen strategy to redesign the nation's educational policy on goals, method and content was national collective participation through public debate and consensus formation. The mechanism of participation was the convening of the Pedagogical Congress made up of local, provincial and national assemblies. There was no intention to try and produce a "quick fix" to the nation's educational problems. The Pedagogical Congress lasted from 1984 to 1988 as it sequentially debated the issues at each of the three levels.[47]

An interesting feature was that while everyone was to have the right to participate, specific representation from organized groups which might stress vested interests (e.g., teachers' unions, parent collectives) was denied. The expected outcome of the Congress was the drafting of a new Education Law which would

replace the one which had been on the books since 1894.

However, the outcome of this strategy of educational change through citizen participation was a failure, for several reasons. In an interview with the Director of the Pedagogical Congress, she stated that in 1984 the intense national enthusiasm for educational change was reflected in the seemingly endless round of speeches, television and radio interviews she had to give. By 1988 when the Pedagogical Congress finally completed its work, there were no more speeches or television interviews. By that time the national interest had shifted to other matters.

Perhaps even more important, the political power of President Alfonsín had diminished greatly by 1988. The economy was in a downward spiral, inflation was into hyperinflation and there were three military mini revolts between 1987 and 1988. By 1988 the government was not in a position of political strength to put through significant legislation of any kind.[48] Also, even though organized groups were not supposed to have special representation, many individual members of the Catholic Church formed a coalition that greatly influenced the final report, a fact that was resented by many non-represented groups.[49]

In sum, the Pedagogical Congress and its strategy of participative change proved to be a failure, the victim of shifting political conditions, a limited national attention span, vague language high on moral content but low on specifics, and fundamental ideological disagreements between participants inside and outside the government. By not acting in 1984 based on

representative government in the legislature, the window opened wide to educational change closed before the Pedagogical Congress had finished its work.

Democracy and the Organization and Management of Education

According to Argentina's federal system of government, the nation has one educational system made up of 23 integrated geographical units (the provinces plus Buenos Aires). As noted earlier, the Federal Education Council, made up of the provincial ministers of education, was created in 1972 to facilitate the integrative process. Under the military regime the Council was used as a mechanism to force compliance of the central government's policies upon the 23 provincial education systems.

With the arrival of democracy, however, the original intent was to use the Council to "articulate policies between the various jurisdictions, and to shape an environment based on the interchange of ideas and cooperation that facilitates the unity of the nation."[50] How effective was the Council in this mission?

In the 1984 elections, 12 of the 22 provincial governorships went to the party out of power (Justicialistas), and in 1987 five more provinces went to the opposition. Consequently, two activities took precedence over the Council's integration mission: (1) the provincial ministers of education fought to establish and protect their federalist rights against real or imagined interventions from the center, and (2) the members of the different political parties made the Council a continuous political battleground for control over educational policy.

In addition, the Council had no staff of its own, and decisions were not binding on any province. Consequently, as one senior manager pointed out, "it was not fertile ground for problem solving." One study was even more direct. "The Council was practically paralyzed."[51]

The integration and articulation between the Ministry of Culture and Education and the provincial educational systems became even more fragile as the provinces developed their own constitutions and educational laws. The military dictatorship would simply override these legal structures when it seemed convenient, but the civilian central governments respected the constraints.

The provinces also began to develop their own organizational models and pedagogical strategies.[52] A MCE report notes the problem as serious. "It is of priority interest to overcome the current institutional and organizational dispersion which has the provinces functioning without common frameworks and each level of instruction operating as a watertight compartment."[53] Several knowledgeable educators commented that moving from one province to another in Argentina has become like moving from one country to another.

The Ministry of Education Administrative Infrastructure

Producing a qualitatively strong administrative infrastructure within any complex organization, such as a ministry of education, requires the presence of creative and well trained officials who have time to initiate and\or carry through

more effective processes and programs than those that previously existed. After it is reintroduced, does democratization naturally facilitate the development of a strong administrative infrastructure? It probably can, but that has not necessarily been the case in Argentina during the 1989-1993 period under study.

To begin, for decades there has been a perception in the country that the Ministry of Education is a centralized, sluggish, insensitive, uncreative, bureaucratic institution. In an effort to energize the MCE, significant structural reforms are frequently conducted. Between 1989 and 1993 of President Menem's administration, there were three such reforms.

Job stability at the top has not been a characteristic during either autocratic or democratic regimes. Between 1890 and 1993 the Ministry of Education had 76 ministers. During the last military government (1976-1983) there were five, and during the democratic period of 1983-1993 there have been five.[54]

In effect, a type of vicious circle inflicts the MCE. A new minister is appointed because of the president's unhappiness with the educational system. The new minister brings in new people and new programs, but without the material resources, information, planning capability or a creative work environment to perform at a high level of effectiveness. When institutional change does not follow quickly, the president gets impatient or is pressured into appointing another minister.

Apart from the minister, generally speaking there are three

levels of officials in the MCE. The senior branch leadership generally changes even more frequently than the typical 18 month longevity of the Minister of Education. The middle level officials, made up mostly of technical skills personnel, usually last less than one year.

Two forces are mainly behind the job instability within the senior ranks. As new ministers enter the MCE, they bring their own team of senior officials with them, who in turn put their own people into the mid ranks. The second force is principally political. The political parties, as well as the Catholic Church, covet high government posts and constantly pressure to have "one of their own" placed in these key roles. It usually makes little difference whether or not the individual holding the job being targeted is doing an effective job. Under these precarious conditions, risk taking on program development or even exercising critical judgement of a more senior officials plan is not advisable behavior.

These high MCE posts are very complex and have an extensive job learning curve. With departures coming so rapidly, many (if not most) officials leave with half finished projects, and even before they fully comprehend their jobs.

Several interviews were held with senior MCE officials (present and past), and most felt that their jobs were chips to be bargained for between political parties. For example, if special legislation were needed, jobs might well be traded for votes. Within the MCE, groups of political party members would

often form to push their party's policies and serious tensions would emerge. As one former official stated, "it reaches a point where the leaders of different groups can't talk to each other - even by telephone." The consequence of the turbulent work environment within the MCE makes program development and execution extremely difficult.

The third and lowest level of professional workers in the MCE are called functionaries. They receive very low pay, do not have much job visibility, typically do not have a higher education degree, and have long-term job stability. Their tasks are important because they carry out much of the work decided upon by others in the MCE.

A study by Braslavsky and Tiramonti points out that the large majority of the most senior functionaries came into the MCE during the periods of authoritarian governments. Because they are not rewarded for their individual job efforts, there is a pronounced tendency to seek out and hold segments of power within their work domains.[55] Consequently, these "invisible bureaucrats" can, and frequently do, slow down the introduction of new programs that might threaten their own domains of influence.[56]

There is one other type of worker that makes an important contribution to activity of the MCF; the professional consultant. Unlike the Military regime, the democratic governments respect the academic skills of the scientific community but cannot afford to hire them on a full-time basis. Consequently, small teams of

consultants are frequently contracted (at a higher fee level) to plan and carry forward many projects. While important development activities often come out of this arrangement, it is also prone to produce serious conflicts between the temporary consultant teams and the long-term functionaries who feel threatened by their presence.

Educational Planning

The instability within the MCE has also had an impact on the ability to establish new directions for the educational system through systematic planning. As pointed out earlier, the military regime's distrust of the planning process and the social science trained planners brought an end to its effective use as a management tool. So much damage had been done, with the once trained cadres gone or into other professions, the reconstruction of the planning capacity with the return of democracy has not been very effective in overcoming major barriers.

For example, with the increasing degrees of autonomy exercised by the provinces under federalism after 1984, it became increasing difficult to even gather nation-wide educaticnal statistics, let alone produce a serious educational plan for the nation. In fact, after 1989 the MCE no longer even produced a statistical report on the nation (e.g, costs, graduation rates, number of students, teachers, schools, etc.).

Part of the problem is that there is no unified vision in Argentina about the direction the educational system should go. The political parties at the national and provincial levels press

for their own policy initiatives thus limiting the possibility of cohesive planning. Within the MCE the potential for significant planning is also seriously constrained because, as one respondent put it, "the political appointment times are shorter than the required planning times."

The planning complexities are such that the MCE has not had its own planning office for several years. What planning exist tends to be very short-term and tied to specific projects (e.g., the construction of a school or development of a training program).

Democracy and the Educational Budget

The last civilian government (1973-75) prior to the military regime in Argentina (1976-1983) was spending approximately 3.87% of the GNP on eduction. Under the military, this figure was cut to a yearly average of 3.22% between 1976-1980, and then advanced slightly to 3.78% between 1981-83. With the return of democracy, the percent of GNP going to education immediately advanced to 4.84% (1984-1986)[57]. As a percent of total public expenditures, the rate fell from 16.8% just prior to the military regime to 13% during its first four years.[58]

In their analysis of the financial data, Isuani and Tenti state the obvious, "...there exists a relationship between the type of political regime and the assignment of resources to education."[59] The relationship also applies to defense spending which fell from a high of 9.9% of total government spending under the military in 1976-1980 to half that amount during the first

two years of the 1984-1986 transition.[60]

With the reintroduction of democracy, between 1983 and 1986 higher education became free and enrollment exploded with over 300 thousand new students. Minimal budgetary consideration was given to the financial impact of the expanded enrollment,[61] and per pupil expenditures for public higher education fell to as low or lower than primary and secondary education.[62] Overcrowded and poorly equipped classrooms, multiple shifts, poorly paid professors, mass student failures (in universities to reduce enrollment), and badly maintained facilities became a fact of life in Argentine education.

The pent-up reaction to the continued erosion of educational funding exploded in dramatic street demonstrations in April and May of 1992. Over 100,000 angry demonstrators marched the streets of Buenos Aires demanding more money be spent on public education, but at no cost to students or their parents (e.g., free university tuition).

With a situation of civic disorder as this, the difference in reactions of the military regime and the democratic government are quite apparent. The generals had forbidden all public demonstrations and were always prepared to put down forcefully any defiance to their authority. In a democratic regime the outcome "can induce the kinds of societal fears that lead to a frantic search for solutions 'at any cost...'"[63]

These demonstrations were, by-in-large, responsible for the inclusion in the new Education Law of 1993 a massive but strange

increase in financial support.[64] The sum is massive because it supposedly pledges the nation to either: (1) a budget increase of 20% a year (starting 1993) for five consecutive years (thus doubling total expenditures), or (2) an increase by 50% the percent of GNP going to education in the base year of 1992. The greater of the two sums would go into effect.

The wording of the financial commitment is strange because the law does not identify from where the substantial amount of additional funding will come: the municipalities, provinces or the central government. Interviews at all three levels found almost complete confusion on the matter; senior MCE officials tended to argue that the municipalities and provinces would have to contribute most of it because education had been decentralized, and officials at these lower levels argued that the central government would have to pay because the provinces and municipalities had no resource or the capacity to generate the resources necessary.

Interestingly enough, before this major financial commitment was made in the law, which is unusual in itself, no studies had been conducted regarding the projected costs of education over the next few years. Nor had any plans been developed about how this very short-term, 100 percent increase in educational funding would be spent. When the author asked a senior policy consultant at the MCE what the Ministry was going to do first, his response was that at least two economists must be hired because up to that point none were on the payroll.

The important point to be made with respect to policy formation is that the two types of government are quite capable of responding to political unrest in exactly the opposite manner; the first by crushing it out of existence, and the second by mindlessly embracing it with policy commitments that are more expedient than a thoughtful analysis of the realities of the situation.

Passing the New Educational Law

As previously noted, under the military regime the laws of the land were either ignored or strictly enforced, whichever proved convenient. The functioning of legislative bodies was suspended and elected officials removed from office, often to be replaced my military officers.

With the return of democracy, Argentina once again became a nation of laws legitimized by representative government. The presence of democracy, however, did not result in a smooth path for educational reform. A good illustration of the complexities of democratic decision making would be the passage of the new Federal Law of Education in 1993 (Ley 24,195).

From 1894 to 1993, Argentina operated under the same organic law which gave structure to the educational system. Numerous attempts to change that law had been made in 1918, 1939, 1946, 1969, 1974/75 and 1979, but all had failed. The long absence of systematic legal foundation had resulted in, as Isuani and Tenti observe, obsolescence, normative gaps, "and the existence of important defects in the 'architecture' of the national

educational system."[65]

Following the failure of the Pedagogical Congress to produce an educational law through "national participation," an intense effort was initiated in the Legislature in 1992. At least 10 distinct organic laws were proposed by different political and vested-interest groups. At the center of the problem was the lack of a shared vision regarding the specific ends and means of education in Argentina. After intense negotiations, street demonstrations and legislative boycotts, a new Education Law was finally passed.

In order to obtain the necessary votes for passage, the new Education Law was the result of a collection of compromises and obfuscation, strong on convictions but weak on mechanisms. The Law identifies the principles of educational governance as, national unity, democratization, decentralization, federalization, and articulation. However, little is said about establishing mechanisms as to which office is to do what, where and how.

In order for all political factions to claim victory, it had to be vague and ambiguous. A newspaper editorial stated, "The law sins, in a large measure, through dependency on voluntary compliance and being out of touch with reality."[66] With the new Education Law came another reform in the structure of the Ministry of Education, this one intended to establish the mission as a "Ministry without schools."

As this study drew to a close in mid-1993, there were many

signs that the national and provincial ministries of education were prepared to make significant advances in strengthening the administrative structures of the system. Along with the new Education Law and the restructuring of the MCE, a transfer of the nationally controlled secondary schools to the control of the provinces had just taken place, several skilled academics had been hired in key roles in the MCE, and a pact on educational finance was being negotiated between the central and provincial governments. Whether or not the significant changes result will be interesting to see in future years.

Conclusion

The objective of this study is not to demonstrate that dictatorships are bad and democracies good. That is an obvious truth that needs little reinforcement. Rather, this study compares the strategies of management reform of the pre-university educational system of two diametrically opposed systems of government, and points out how difficult it is to change and educational system no matter what type of government is in place.

The opening page of this paper identifies and contrasts six strategies of change used by the military and civilian governments. The intended outcomes were not produced by either form of government. Certainly, attempts to generalize the experience of one nation to others is a hazardous activity, there are lessons from the Argentine experience that might prove valuable elsewhere.

1. Vision. Pursuing a generally accepted societal vision about the course an educational system should take is critical in directing the process of reform. In Argentina, the military regime had no such vision about the direction the educational system should take. It was principally concerned about executing procedures of rigorous control so as to preserve its own authority. It wanted no other entity to set an educational agenda that might challenge its authority.

Under democratic government the various political parties at the national and provincial levels battled for their own political agendas that included their aims for education. The outcome, more often than not, was the status quo or a compromise program that made few people happy.

2. Participation. Citizen participation and good timing play important roles in the reform process. In Argentina, the military regime practiced the politics of exclusion and thus allowed only loyal elites to participate in the educational decision-making process. Timing was of little importance because the military leaders chose to open and close the window of change at their own discretion.

The democratic government, especially in the beginning, practiced the politics of inclusion, such as with the five-year Pedagogical Congress. So many people and interests were involved that focused decisions could not be made. By the time the final reports and recommendations were drafted, national attention and political power had shifted elsewhere.

3. Stability in the Ministry of Education. Well trained people should be placed in key decision-making positions and provided sufficient time and job stability to learn their tasks, develop programs, and carry them out without fear of being replaced for reasons other than merit.

In Argentina, under the military regime, instability came through personnel purges and the appointment of loyalists to key positions. Instability also exists under the democratic government as impatience with the progress of educational change brings about frequent changes in ministers and senior officials. Also, political parties constantly pressure to have their own members placed in important jobs whether or not the incumbents are performing well.

4. Planning. Without a strong planning capability, it is difficult to combine the capacities of people and resources, and lead the institution in the direction of its established vision.

The military regime destroyed the planning capability of the educational institution fearing it could become a subversive entity. Under the democratic system, even after a full decade, a serious planning capability had not emerged in the MCE. Instability in personnel appointments, low pay scales, and the degrees of autonomy asserted by the provinces hindered significantly the development of a national planning capability.

5. Educational Finance and Enrollment. If educational quality is a goal, the society must be prepared make the necessary sacrifices to pay for it.

Consistent with the military regime's view that education was an expense and generally unnecessary for the masses of society, the budget supporting public education was cut along with enrollment, especially for higher education and adult education. With the return of democracy, financial support was increased but not nearly enough to cope with the surge in enrollment.

6. Educational Law. The education law, which is written to reflect the national interest, designs the structure and function of system and must supersede the special interests of particular groups.

The military regime ignored all forms of law when it proved convenient, and in other instances used it for coercive purposes. The democratic government succeeded in finally passing the first foundation education law in over 100 years, but in order to receive support from the various political parties it had to be extremely general in character.

In sum, two Argentine educators observe that "democracy is a collective construction that goes forward and backward, makes wise decisions as well as errors, and has successes and failures."[67] Certainly that has been the case with Argentina and its educational system since 1983. The hopeful expectation is that with the educational restructuring of 1993, many of the problems hindering forward movement will be ironed out.

Endnotes

1. E. Mark Hanson, Educational Reform and Administrative Development: The Cases of Colombia and Venezuela (Stanford, CA:

Hoover Institution Press, 1986).

2. The World Bank, World Development Report 1994: Infrastructure for Development (Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 14.

3. The Ministry of Education gave its approval for the research project and opened many doors throughout the country. Information for the study came principally from extensive interviews and document analysis. More than 200 individuals were interviewed, either individually or in small groups, in six of the 22 provinces and in Buenos Aires. In addition to interviews with distinguished academic scholars at numerous universities, interviews were held with past and present classroom teachers, school principals, provincial educational leaders, and most of the senior MCE officials. Several hundred documents were reviewed as part of the body of literature to support the study. The author extends his special thanks to Dra. Cecilia Braslavsky for her kind assistance as well as the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) for providing a research base of operation.

4. Peter Snow and Luigi Manzetti, Political Forces in Argentina, 3d ed. (London: Praeger, 1993), p. 8.

5. Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, Transformación de la educación nacional (Buenos Aires: Congreso de la Nacion, 1991), p. 17-18.

6. Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, Transformación, p. 18.

7. Isidoro Cheresky and Jacques Chonchol, compiladores, Crisis y transformación de los regimenes autoritarios (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1985).

8. Clarin, April 1, 1977.

9. Marcelo Cavarozzi, Autoritarismo y democracia: 1955-1983 (Buenos Aires: Biblioteca Politica, 1983), p. 62.

10. Eric Nordlinger, Soldiers and Politics: Military Coups and Governments (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977), p. 6.

11. Ernesto Isuani and Emilio Tenti, Estado democrático y política social (Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1989), p. 222.

12. Nunca más: Informe de la Comisión Nacional Sobre la Desaparición de Personas (Buenos Aires, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1984), p. 10.

13. Snow and Manzetti, p. 34.

14. Hilda Lanza y Silvia Finocchio, Curriculum presente, ciencia ausente: La enseñanza de la historia en la Argentina de hoy, Tomo III, (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 1993), p. 41.

15. Snow and Manzetti, p. 180.

16. Daniel Filmus y Graciela Frigerio, Educación, autoritarismo y democracia (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 1988), p. 15.

17. Guillermina Tiramonti, Hacia dónde va la burocracia educativa? (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 1989), pp. 17-20.

18. Norberto Fernández Lamarra, "Poder y burocracia en el sistema educativo" (Buenos Aires: CEFYL, 1990), p. 4.

19. Juan Tedesco, "Elementos para una sociología de curriculum escolar en Argentina," en El proyecto educativo autoritario: Argentina 1976-1982, compiladores, Juan Tedesco, Cecilia Braslavsky y Ricardo Carciofi (Buenos Aires: FLACSO, 1985), p. 63.

20. Braslavsky y Tiramonti, p. 155.

21. Tiramonti, p. 21.

22. Ley 19,682, (1972).

23. Eduardo Slomiansky, "El Consejo Federal de Cultura y Educación como instrumento para la democratización del sistema educativo" (Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1988), p. 21.

24. Slomiansky, p. 31.

25. Inés Aguerrondo, "El planeamiento de la educación en la República Argentina: Su historia, estado actual y perspectiva," Estado del planeamiento educativo en América Latina y El Caribe, Vol. V (Caracas: CINTERPLAN, 1987), p. 7.

26. Norberto Fernández Lamarra, et al., Calidad de la educación: Aportes para un debate desde la perspectiva del planeamiento (Buenos Aires, Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, 1992), p. 8.

27. Decree No. 2,620, December 19, 1980

28. Lanza and Finocchio, p. 44.

29. Filmus and Frigerio, p. 22.

30. Tedesco, pp. 57-58.

31. Tedesco, p. 54.

32. Ministry of Education Circular, February 20, 1978.

33. Susana Peñalva, Pedro Pírez y Alejandro Rofman, "Centralización/Descentralización del estado en la Argentina," en Descentralización del estado: Requerimientos y políticas en la crisis, compiladores, Elsa Laurelli, Alejandro Rofman (Buenos Aires: Ediciones CEUR, 1989), p. 177.

34. Emilio Tenti Fanfani, La escuela vacía (Buenos Aires: UNICEF/LOSADA, 1992), p. 119.

35. Pablo Hensel y Mónica Levcovich, Análisis del gasto público en educación (Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1989), p. 12.

36. Tedesco, Braslavsky and Carciofi, Table 11.

37. Norma Paviglianiti, Neoconservadurismo y educación: Un debate silenciado en la Argentina del 90 (Buenos Aires: Libros del Quirquincho, 1991), p. 46.

38. Norberto Fernández Lamarra y Ana Vitar, Planificación, federalismo, y descentralización en la Argentina (Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Educación y Justicia, 1991), p. 2.

39. Isuani and Tenti, p. 221.

40. Cecilia Braslavsky, "Estado, burocracia y políticas educativas," en El proyecto educativo autoritario, pp. 89-90.

41. Cavarozzi, p. 69.

42. Snow and Manzetti, p. 109.

43. Snow and Manzetti, pp. 32-37.

44. Ministerio de Educación y Justicia, Congreso Pedagógico: Informe final de la Asamblea Nacional (Buenos Aires: República de Argentina, 1988), p. 43.

45. Cecilia Braslavsky, La transición democrática en la educación (Buenos Aires: Centro de Estudios de Cultura y Sociedad, 1986), p. 21.

46. Fernández Lamarra, "Poder y burocracia," p. 5.; Tiramonte, p. 22.

47. Ministerio de Educación y Justicia, Congreso Pedagógico.

48. Snow and Manzetti, pp. 42-47.

49. For an insightful discussion of the historic role played by the Catholic Church in the Argentine educational system see: V. W. Leonard, Politics, Politicians, Pupils, and Priests: Argentine Education Since 1943 (New York: Peter Lang, 1989).

50. Norberto Fernández Lamarra, La planificación y la administración en el marco de la transformación y la educación en la Argentina (Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Educación y Justicia), p. 31.

51. Silvia Novick de Senén González, et al., "La práctica de la planificación educativa en el contexto del proceso de descentralización" (Paris: IIEP UNESCO, 1993 documento de trabajo), p. 12.

52. Norma Paviglianiti, Diagnóstico de la administración central de educación (Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Educación y Justicia, 1989), p. 205.

53. Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, Transformación de la educación nacional (Buenos Aires: República de Argentina, 1991), p. 49.

54. Braslavsky and Tiramonti, p. 154.

55. Braslavsky and Tiramonti, pp. 40-47, 162-163.

56. Inés Aguerrondo and Silvia Novick de Senén González, República de Argentina: La educación en los estados provinciales (Buenos Aires: Consejo Federal de Inversiones, 1988, versión preliminar), p. 44.

57. Hensel and Levcovich, p. 11; Ministerio de Educación y Justicia, El proyecto principal de educación en Argentina (Buenos Aires: República de Argentina, 1991), Cuadro 24.

58. Hensel and Levcovich, Cuadro 5; Emilio Tenti Fanfani, La escuela vacía (Buenos Aires: UNICEF/LOSADA, 1992), p. 119.

59. Isuani and Tenti, p. 224.

60. Hensel and Levcovich, p. 9.

61. The World Bank, Argentina: Reallocating Resources for the Improvement of Education (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1991), p. x.

62. Hensel and Levcovich, p. 34.

63. Macridis and Burg, p. 173.

64. Ley Federal de Educación 24,195 (1993).

65. Isuani and Tenti, p. 219.

66. La Nación, April 23, 1993, p. 4.

67. Aguerrondo and Novick de Senén González, p. 43.